



Senator Herb Kohl

United States Senator for Wisconsin



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Throughout the world today many people are focusing on a problem that doesn't always get the attention it deserves: elder abuse. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day serves as a reminder that we must redouble our efforts.

Last year, 5,285 cases of suspected abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation involving older adults were reported in Wisconsin. Tragically, 22 incidents were related to a death, and a total of 357 incidents were considered life-threatening. Too often, these crimes are committed by people who take advantage of victims who are fragile and vulnerable, and they know that the chances of getting caught are slim.

As Chairman of the Aging Committee, I convened a hearing in 2011 featuring the legendary performer, Mickey Rooney, who bravely shared his personal story of abuse. Since that hearing, I am proud that the "End Abuse in Later Life Act," which enhances direct services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault who are 50 years or older, was recently included as part of the Senate-passed reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. It is my hope that this landmark law will be swiftly considered in the House and signed into law before the end of the year.

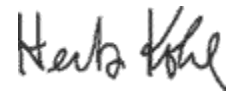
I also applaud Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius for announcing yesterday that \$5.5 million would be made available for grants aimed at finding new ways to prevent elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. This new initiative, along with efforts to convene the Elder Justice Coordinating Council, will go a long way to protecting the rights of older people.

But, we all know there is much more work to be done. We must ensure that federal, state and local law enforcement agencies work collaboratively with state programs and other key players to combat elder abuse. To do so, I've introduced the "Elder Abuse Victims Act." The bill will establish a first ever, Office of Elder Justice within the Justice Department that will protect America's seniors by strengthening law enforcement's response to elder abuse. While no legislation can end all exploitation, we must do everything in our power to help those victims that come forward asking for help.

For those of us faced with important decisions about our country's future every day, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day challenges us not to forget about the

needs of those who may not be able to speak up for themselves. I hope you will join me in efforts to meet this challenge.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Herb Kohl in black ink.